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U. S. Department of Agriculture

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Housekeepers' Chat

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

"A Spring Dinner for Company". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Leaflet available: "Lamb As You Like It".

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Monday always seems to me one of the very best days to look ahead. That is why I'm choosing this morning to remind you of two events of special interest to homemakers that are scheduled for the near future. The week of April 26 to May 3 this year is National Better Homes Week. If there is one week of the year that women ought to celebrate, that's it, because this occasion is set aside for a united effort throughout the country to bring good housing and wholesome home life within the reach of every American family. The Better Homes Movement has had a splendid record, a record that proves very clearly that the home is still one of the things of greatest interest to the American people. The movement began in 1922 with a campaign to better housing conditions in cities, towns and farms, and to improve home life. During that first year 500 communities took part in the campaign and were so successful that the movement was organized on a national basis with Herbert Hoover as its first president. Last year--only eight years later--7,222 communities participated.

What does the organization do? It encourages and sponsors community effort of any sort for better homes--club programs on housing and home life, contests for home improvement, exhibits of new moderate cost homes of good standards and demonstrations of old homes that have been successfully and inexpensively fixed over to meet present-day standards. The climax of the year's work along these lines comes at Better Homes Week in the spring when results are demonstrated and special Better Homes celebrations take place. So, during that week, I'm planning to tell you of what women in different parts of the country have done for home improvement. And you and I will also discuss, at that time, ways of making our own homes better.

The second big event on the calendar in the near future is May Day, now known as National Child Health Day. Since last fall when President Hoover called a general session of the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection in Washington, many of us have realized more than ever before, how important this subject is to us as a nation.

Remember those two dates--the week of April 26 for Better Homes and May first for Child Health Day.

Now let's talk about our spring menu. We're having company at our house tomorrow night, so the Menu Specialist planned a meal to remind our guests that though the weather remains a bit chilly spring is really here. You have only to go into the grocery store to be aware of that. What with greens and rhubarb on the counter to say nothing of that growing in your garden. But we must get on with our menu. Have you a long firm point on your pencils? Good. You'll need it because I have two recipes to give you and the meat recipe is a long one. Yes, Matilda, I will read those recipes slowly. I promise.

The menu begins with Braised Breast of Lamb with Spinach Stuffing--delicious and different, a real spring main dish. Then, Buttered Young Carrots; Baked or Scalloped Potatoes; and, for dessert, Baked Rhubarb. I'll repeat the menu. Braised Breast of Lamb with Spinach Stuffing; Buttered Young Carrots; Baked or Scalloped Potatoes; and, for dessert, Baked Rhubarb. No waste of fuel in this meal, you see, because every item but the carrots is cooked in the oven.

Since the meat must be put in a hot oven, the baked rhubarb might be prepared while the oven is warming up for the meat. Put it in as soon as you turn on the oven. Here let me say a word or two about this spring food which always reminds me of the verse about the little girl with the curl in the middle of her forehead.--"When she was good she was very very good, but when she was bad, she was horrid." Rhubarb in my opinion is much like the little girl, all depending on the way it is prepared. It has such a delicate structure and contains so much water, that unless care is taken to cook it properly, it will be soupy and unpalatable both in looks and taste. There are however, two ways of preparing it so that it will be very very good. First, it may be cut up in pieces about an inch long with the attractive red skin always left on, and cooked on the top of the stove in thick syrup, quickly. Boil together 2 cups of sugar and 1 of water until the sugar is dissolved. Then add the rhubarb pieces and cook not more than five minutes. The Menu Specialist has a scientific note to add here, by the way of explanation. She says that the high acidity of the rhubarb breaks down sugar chemically during long boiling into simpler sugars that are not so sweet. For this reason make your syrup heavy to begin with and cook the rhubarb in it a short time.

Now the second way of preparing delicious rhubarb--baking. Pencils still working? There are three ingredients:

2 cups of rhubarb cut in 2-inch pieces
1 and 1/2 cups of sugar
1/2 teaspoon of salt

Once more, those three. (Repeat).

Into a greased baking dish, put a layer of the rhubarb, sprinkle with sugar and a little salt, add more rhubarb, and repeat until all the ingredients are used. Bake in a moderately hot oven for about 30 minutes. Stir occasionally to be sure the sugar has dissolved. Serve from the dish. A glass dish is very pretty for this purpose because the pink sauce inside shows through and looks particularly attractive.

New tiny carrots are so small and tender that they can be cooked whole without peeling. They are delicious served with butter. And be sure not to overcook them.

Now for the braised breast of lamb. Simmer a breast of lamb until it is tender in enough salted water to cover. Remove from the broth, slip the bones out at once, and allow the meat to cool. Meanwhile prepare the spinach stuffing. Spread out the breast of lamb, cover with a thin layer of the stuffing, roll, and tie at both ends with clean white string. Place the rolled meat in a baking pan, sprinkle lightly with flour, pour 1/4 cup of the broth around it, and brown in a hot oven. In serving slice the meat from the end of the roll.

SPINACH STUFFING

Now the eight ingredients.

2 cups dry bread crumbs.	1 tablespoon chopped green pepper
1/2 pound cleaned spinach leaves	1 tablespoon chopped onion
4 tablespoons butter	1/2 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons chopped celery	1/4 teaspoon pepper

I'll repeat those (Repeat).

Wash the spinach thoroughly, cut into fine pieces, and place in a pan with the pepper, minced fine, the onion, and one-half the butter. Cook about 2 minutes, long enough to wilt the spinach slightly, stirring constantly. Then push the spinach to one side of the pan, melt the remaining butter in the empty part of the pan, and mix with it the bread crumbs, so that they absorb the butter. This is simply an easy way of buttering the crumbs without using another pan. Mix the spinach and crumbs and stir until somewhat dry. The spinach will become more moist as the stuffing cooks.

